

PROCEEDINGS
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THE KING RAIL OF CUBA.

BY J. H. RILEY.

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Ever since I was in Cuba with Mr. William Palmer in 1900, and became aware that a form of King Rail was resident on the island, though we failed to obtain a specimen, I have been extremely desirous of examining a series of breeding birds from that island. In 1911, when Mr. Charles T. Ramsden began to correspond with the Division of Birds, I asked him if it would be possible to secure a few breeding King Rail from Cuba for the U. S. National Museum and he promptly replied that he only had one specimen in skin form which he generously presented to the Museum. While this specimen differed in certain particulars from the King Rail, I hesitated to name it on the strength of a single specimen. While in Washington in the fall of the past year, Mr. Ramsden said he had a small series of mounted birds which he would take down and loan me for comparison. This he has done at considerable trouble, forwarding his entire series, consisting of five birds, all from the type locality. In consideration of the great interest he has shown in the matter and for his intimate knowledge of the ornithology of Cuba, it is no more than just that this form of rail should bear his name and I take great pleasure in naming it in his honor. It may be known as:

Rallus elegans ramsdeni subsp. nov.

Type, U. S. National Museum, No. 233,478, adult male, Guantanamo, Cuba, May 4, 1910. Collected by Charles T. Ramsden.

Characters.—Similar to *Rallus elegans elegans*, but smaller, paler, and sides of head behind eye grayer.

Description.—Top of head vandyke brown, the forehead with the bristly shafts darker and the occiput with obscure darker mottlings; hind neck, back and scapulars wood brown with broad dark seal brown centers to the feathers, the hind neck more tawny and the dark centers rather obscure; rump and upper tail-coverts darker than the back (nearer broccoli brown) and the dark centers to the feathers not so pronounced; a supra-oral streak extending to just above the eye, a spot below the eye, and throat, white; supra-auricular region, light neutral gray; lores and a line below and extending beyond eye, vandyke brown, bordered below by vinaceous-cinnamon; sides of neck and breast, vinaceous-cinnamon; abdomen, white; lower tail-coverts blackish brown barred with and bordered on each side with white; sides blackish brown barred with white; thighs, drab externally, white internally; bend of wing bordered with white; wing-coverts hazel; primaries and secondaries blackish brown, becoming lighter towards the tips and slightly margined externally with reddish, this color becoming more pronounced on the inner primaries and secondaries; under wing-coverts blackish, barred with white and a little vinaceous-cinnamon, the latter color more pronounced along the border; tail broccoli brown with a broad central stripe of seal brown. "Iris lightish brown." Wing, 149; tail, 53; culmen, 57; tarsus, 54.5; middle toe, 50 mm.

Remarks.—This form in color is not very different from *Rallus c. elegans*, but is quite a little smaller in all its measurements as the following will show:

	Wing.	Tail.	Culmen.	Tarsus.	Middle toe.
2 adult males from Cuba . . .	152.8	56.5	57.5	55.8	49.8
8 adult males from eastern U.S.	167.1	68.6	63	59.9	54.2
3 adult females from Cuba . . .	144.2	58.5	52.5	51.3	42.3
4 adult females from eastern U.S.	156.4	63.9	57.6	54.9	50.9

Besides the five adults listed above from Cuba there is an immature male that when compared with young of *R. e. elegans* in the same state of plumage appears to be slightly darker. One of the females (No. 386, Coll. Charles T. Ramsden) is unique in that it lacks the hazel of the wing coverts which are Brussels brown barred with black and white and the vandyke brown stripe below and beyond eye is lacking or barely indicated. These appear to be characters of the immature, though the bird appears to be in adult plumage, otherwise. Some of the specimens of *Rallus c. elegans* show the white spotting or barring on the wing-coverts to a greater or less extent but not in such a pronounced manner as the above specimen.

Though Gundlach* gives the King Rail as a resident breeding bird in

* Orn. Cubana, 1895, 239.

Cuba, his statements appear to have been generally overlooked. The following remarks of Mr. Ramsden are pertinent and I hope will remove all doubts upon the subject: "Specimen No. 7, I got as she was hatching; a mule stepped on and injured her. I picked her up with the eggs and brought her home, but the next morning she was dead, so there is no doubt that she is a breeding bird. No. 203 is also a breeding bird. To my mind they are all good Cuban examples and I hope will fit your purpose." Without direct proof it is extremely doubtful if *Rallus e. elegans* occurs in Cuba at all.